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CONVERSATIONS

20 YEARS IN AMERICAN EDUCATION

EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES

BY JOSLYN GREEN

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
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Alonzo Crim
Russell Edgerton
Harold Howe II
Francis Keppel
Clark Kerr
Richard Lyman
Diane Ravitch
Terry Sanford
Martin Trow
Ralph Tyler
Willard Wirtz

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JULY 1985

Education Commission of the States
1860 Lincoln Street, Suite 300
Denver, Colorado 80295

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Foreword

Anyone who reads these fascinating ***Conversations*** about what has happened to education over the last 20 years will be, as I have been, inexorably drawn to the question: What lessons can we learn to equip ourselves for the next 20 years? Though there is more than a little disagreement about particulars, the larger lessons seem clear and unmistakable. Many voices join in agreement about some of the most important issues.

Whenever the United States is in trouble, as it was, for example, during the civil rights confrontations of the 1960s, it turns to education — examining it, questioning it, but ultimately reaffirming its dependence on it. The lesson there, I think, is that our belief in the importance of education to our society runs deep and strong.

There is also a deep-seated sense, a true American tradition, that education must be a vehicle for mobility. All through the past 20 years we extended the scope of that concept. We held fast to the principle that education broadens opportunity.

Every one of the distinguished contributors to these ***Conversations*** shows signs of restlessness. They seem to feel that, for all they have accomplished, they have not done enough. In our restlessness, we Americans are not like our European forebears. And this, I think, is another lesson: if we feel schools are too rigid in their support of class structure, too undemanding in their standards of excellence, too narrow in those they serve, we want change. We want improvement.

We may not yet agree on what should be the agenda for education for the next 20 years. But we do not question that there will be an agenda.

— ***Frank Newman,*** President
Education Commission of the States

Past as Prologue

1

In 1965, early in September, P. Williams, the first Black to attend Gainsboro Elementary School in Tennessee, was elected class president. Late in September, F. Bates, a Black, was dragged from his car by Whites and beaten while driving four other Blacks to Warren County High School in Georgia. State troopers dispersed the crowd that gathered but made no arrests.

In Storrs, Connecticut, that year, 50 students picketed the E.O. Smith High School, protesting an order barring J. Steinman from classes until he shaved off his beard. In Hazelton, Iowa, 16 Amish fathers faced fines for refusing to send their children to public school. In Boston, Massachusetts, four incumbents who opposed busing to end racial imbalance in the public schools were re-elected to the Boston School Committee. In Lowndes County, Alabama, the School Foundation planned a private school system for Whites. In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, it was reported that 2,100 potential high school dropouts had earned more than $1 million in 1964 in a school-work program.

In June, student leader Mario Savio and nearly 600 other demonstrators arrested the previous December in Berkeley, California, were convicted of resisting arrest and trespassing. In October, 10,000 people marching from the University of California-Berkeley toward the Oakland Army Base were blocked by the police and diverted back to Berkeley, where a "teach-in" was held. Eleven people were held in Madison, Wisconsin, for trying to make a citizens' arrest of the commander of the Truax Army Base; Johns Hopkins University was picketed during a speech by Secretary of State Dean Rusk.

Meanwhile in Washington, D.C., in 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Elementary/Secondary Education Act, the Voting Rights Act and the 1965 Higher Education Act. Medicare passed both houses of Congress. Lady Bird Johnson was named honorary chairman of Project Headstart. The National Education Association announced that the number of high school graduates had risen by 93% since 1954.

The International Radio and Television Society formed a committee of leaders in advertising, commercial broadcasting, publishing and industry to promote educational television in 1965. The Carnegie Institute of Technology in 1965 received $5 million from R.K. Mellon to expand the computer information sciences program in the Engineering College.

It was also the year, 1965, that James Conant, John Gardner and Terry Sanford urged states to form a compact to help formulate educational policy across the nation. The idea was approved at a meeting of governors and other leaders from 50 states and three territories in Kansas City, Missouri, in September. Later that year, the new organization, which became the Education Commission of the States, received $300,000 from the Danforth Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation to begin studying educational policy.

A year of tumult, 1965, and perhaps also a year of portents, signifying great troubles and great achievements to come.

Now, though, the events of 20 more years overlie the events of 1965. A generation of American children has passed through the education system in those two decades. The Education Commission of the States, no more than an idea in the minds of political and educational leaders when 1965 began, in 1985 enters its third decade.

Now seems to us at ECS like a good time to take stock of education. We'd like to prepare ourselves for the next 20 years by looking back at the past 20 years. We want to look back not at the history of ECS as an organization, but rather at the entire broad course of American education in recent times. We do this, for ourselves and our readers, to get the sense of continuity and change that best equips us all for the challenges ahead. We do it to get a sense of common themes that link 1985 to 1965 and will link 2005 to this year.

Because we want to take a broad look at education, we asked for help from people who have brought breadth of vision to their work in education. Alonzo Crim, Russell Edgerton, Harold Howe, Francis Keppel, Clark Kerr, Richard Lyman, Diane Ravitch, Terry Sanford, Martin Trow, Ralph Tyler and Willard Wirtz all agreed to be interviewed for this publication.

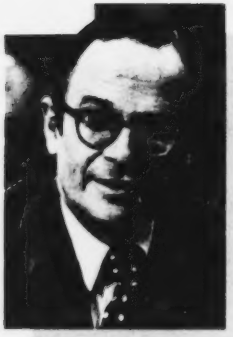
Distinguished policy makers and educators, they need little introduction. Here, though, are a few key facts about each contributor and some indication in their own words about why and how they are interested in education.

"All of my life I have wanted to work with children," says **Alonzo Crim,** superintendent of schools in Atlanta, Georgia, "primarily because the people who helped me grow up and find myself served as good models for me and helped me determine that's what I wanted to do." In 1965, Mr. Crim was a high school principal in Chicago. He became a district superintendent in Chicago in 1968 and superintendent in Compton, California, in 1969. He moved to Atlanta and his present position in 1973.

In 1965, **Russell Edgerton** was an assistant professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin. In 1969 he went to Washington to work for the secretary of HEW (the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare). In 1977, he moved to his present position as president of the American Association for Higher Education. "The events of the mid- and late sixties at a campus like Madison shook me out of my sort of narrow world of being a professor," comments Mr. Edgerton. "When I got to Washington, I found I had some opportunities to address, through public policy, the question of how to encourage colleges and universities to be more responsive to the interests of students and the larger society. That question has been a sort of defining question of my last 15 years."

Harold Howe II began 1965 as director of the Learning Institute of North Carolina, which Governor Sanford had just established. He ended the year as U.S. commissioner of education. In 1985 he is, his wife says, "flunking retirement." He is senior lecturer at the Graduate School of Education at Harvard, he was recently co-chairman (with Marian Wright Edelman) of a study of ***Barriers to Excellence: Children at Risk,*** and he engages in many extracurricular activities. "Since about 1960, I have spent my life trying to adapt education to the service of new constituents who were not being fairly treated in it," points out

Mr. Howe. "Most of the things I've done and am doing now are pretty much directed at that objective. I think it was more of a winning game in the sixties than it is now. But I still think it's an important game, so I'm sticking with it. I don't have any totally new cause to embrace, and I'm glad I embraced the one I did."



Now retired, **Francis Keppel** was U.S. commissioner of education when the Elementary/Secondary Education Act and the Higher Education Act were passed in 1965. "My father was an academic man — dean of Columbia College before the first world war and president of Carnegie after the war," he recalls. "I grew up in a home where education was talked about and spent most of my life in educational institutions. About 20 years ago, I began to get mixed up in public political life, and I've been in and out of it ever since. Even if they don't like it, educators have got to be aware of the fact that public policy or politics is setting the standards for schools and colleges."

Clark Kerr was president of the nine campuses of the University of California in 1965. In 1967, he became chairman of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education and, in 1974, chairman of the Carnegie Council on Higher Education. More recently, he has prepared a report for the Association of Governing Boards on college presidencies, a report he is now following up with a monograph. "My interest in education was basically affected by the interest my mother had," he says. "A milliner back when ladies had very fancy hats, she earned enough money to be sure her children could go to college. (My three sisters went to Oberlin, and I went to Swarthmore.) Her emphasis on our getting a good education was the most formative factor in the development of my interest in education."

"I was a professor of history at Stanford in 1965 and associate dean of the School of Humanities and Science — my first administrative position," recalls **Richard Lyman.** He became vice president and provost at Stanford in 1966 and president in 1970. After 10 years in that position, he became president of the Rockefeller Foundation. "No historian worth his salt really thinks that any very major portion of whatever is happening at a given moment is brand new," comments Mr. Lyman. "Nothing is harder than to find new things; you can usually find analogies in the past if not strong similarities. One major element of continuity is that American education is always being examined and found wanting. Reforms are always being proposed."

"If I knew 20 years ago what I know now and if I'd had an opportunity to do more than I did then (which was to push a baby carriage in Central Park) — if I'd had a position of authority to speak from — I would have put much more emphasis on maintaining high expectations, particularly as we proceeded with the integration of schools," says **Diane Ravitch.** She has, in those 20 years, established herself in a position of considerable authority as a historian of education and writer. Author of ***The Great School Wars*** and ***The Troubled Crusade: American Education 1945–1980,*** she is now beginning a study of the humanities curricula in elementary and secondary schools.

"I think I came by my dedication to education honestly," comments the former governor of North Carolina and recently retired president of Duke University, **Terry Sanford.** "I think I saw it as the best way to build a state that was lagging in a great many measures of achievement. The best way to build was to build human resources; the best way, or perhaps only way, of building human resources is better

education." In 1965, shortly after he left the governor's office, he began the effort that led to the establishment of the Education Commission of the States.

Twenty years ago, **Martin Trow** was on leave from the Department of Sociology in Berkeley, in Britain doing research for a book on British education. Now director of Berkeley's Center for Studies in Higher Education, he is again at work on a book about Britain, a comparison of British and American higher education. "I must say that my sense of hopefulness and optimism about higher education can't help but be affected by my being at Berkeley, which on the whole works extremely well," Mr. Trow observes. "The standards for appointment and academic quality have on the whole held up. The amazing thing is how little the governance structure and the relations between students, faculty and administrators have changed over these two decades. There have been some good things and some bad. But it's very much the same university it was 20 years ago, only bigger and in some ways stronger."

"Sixty-four years ago, I taught high school science in Pierre, South Dakota, to a very mixed group — one-fourth Indian children, one-fourth children of what we called cowpunchers, the others children of state officials and people who provided local services. I found it so exciting and interesting to work with such a diverse group that I became hooked on teaching. Ever since then I've never given up." That's how a lifelong enthusiasm began for **Ralph Tyler.** In 1965, many years into his extensive career in education, he was director of the Center for Advanced Study in Behavioral Sciences and chairman of the Exploratory Committee on the Progress of Education. Now 83 years

old, Mr. Tyler continues to spend a day a month in classrooms. "There's nothing more important," he thinks, "than helping young people develop and become the civilized people they're capable of becoming."

Now semiretired after many years of teaching and public service, **Willard Wirtz** was secretary of labor in 1965. He has renewed his earlier interest in education through some law teaching and work with the National Institute of Work and Learning. That interest he attributes to nature, nurture and experience. "My grandfather was a teacher, my father was a teacher and so was my mother. (Our two sons are teachers, too. The family's full of it.) Also shaping my interest were whatever advantages there are — and I think they are very large — in a liberal education and an opportunity to teach when I'd finished law school. I guess my interest is a combination of whatever may have been in the 'genes' and the accidents of early experience."

In the remarks of these contributors, readers will find a great deal of general agreement on dominant themes, accomplishments and challenges. But they will not find complete unanimity. That seems neither possible nor desirable in a wide-ranging discussion of major issues in education.

Our hope is that this conversation about continuity and change will stimulate further conversation, and help guide our thinking about ways to improve American education.

Really Stretching, and Other Changes

2

I remember so vividly the showdown with the Black Student Union at Stanford in 1968 on the morrow of Martin Luther King's assassination, when so many colleges had to face reality all of a sudden. One of the things we did was to promise a best effort to double the size of the Black enrollment in the freshman class the following year. We thought at Stanford, as at other such places, that we'd been making some effort to find talented Black students. (We hadn't even started any serious effort to find Hispanos yet.) When we really got confronted with it, we realized we hadn't tried very hard. We hadn't really stretched as we were going to have to stretch and should have been stretching.

— Richard Lyman

Facing the reality of the ethnic and economic diversity of American society, and stretching to reach more students with more education, have been dominant themes of the last 20 years in education. The confrontation with that aspect of reality has not been entirely successful nor is it entirely complete, according to Mr. Lyman and many other contributors. "We're a less united nation than we were 20 or 25 years ago; this has helped make it more difficult to make education operate," says Mr. Kerr. He is not alone in finding that the attempt to confront diversity has created some serious and still unsolved problems. He and other contributors also discuss some other big changes that have taken place in the last 20 years. Some contributors comment on the pace of change and the limits of change.

Crim: A major change I've seen in education in the last 20 years (and I've been in it more than 30 years) is that we've made it more inclusive. Rather than excluding everybody, we have tried to include everybody. I think our major worry at present, as everyone is clamoring for so much reform, is that we don't return to being exclusive; I'm very glad that people are beginning to worry about the dropout rates.

Since education has become more inclusive, more people have opportunities. I think attitudes have changed. It's not that social problems and racism don't still exist. But, to take myself as an example — certainly 25 years ago no one would

have contemplated that, as a Black educator, I could become superintendent in Atlanta. No one thinks of this as a major problem any more, which illustrates a great social advancement in our country. In 1965 I would never have allowed myself to believe I could become superintendent.

Kerr: I would say that the biggest development in the last 20–25 years has been the emphasis on more equality of opportunity. I would call that the biggest single internal factor within education — and also the biggest outside pressure on education at all levels.

Howe: Without a doubt the biggest change has been the movement into higher levels of schools and colleges of a segment of society that was less well represented before. Many more children of Blacks, Hispanos and families of poverty now graduate from high school than graduated in 1965. Many new students have also entered higher education; new institutions have developed to serve the interests of these new populations. (At some point in the 1960s, something like one new community college opened its doors each week, although that pace slowed in the 1970s.) Still, the higher you look on the education ladder, the more underrepresented the minorities and the poor are. There have been some changes we can be proud of in the last 20 years. But real problems remain.

Why did this movement of new students into education take place when it did?

Howe: I think it was for complex and related reasons. World War II had a powerful effect on how Americans felt about minorities, if only because during the war many people saw parts of the country and kinds of people for the first time. The effect was, I think, to soften differences of race and culture. The G.I. Bill and the opportunities it offered made a tremendous difference. The civil rights movement was a very active force for change. After the *Brown* decision of 1954, there was much greater emphasis on opening up all of society to minorities — opening up jobs and political participation as well as education. I see the civil rights movement as an effort by the American people and the American political system to make the system really do what its ideals express. In the process, this country changed fundamentally.

Though the civil rights movement was an engine for change in education, it has to be seen as separate from education. Some elements of the movement had their origins within education, like the entrance of Blacks into the all-White major southern universities and the public schools of the South. But the movement was clearly broader than education. It embraced the churches of the country. It embraced the political leadership of the country. It embraced, in general, the conscience of the country.

It has slowed a good deal now. It is less sure of itself, has less visible leadership and is less effective. But it remains something of a force and it is still affecting the way we think about things in schools and colleges and universities.

What about higher education in particular?

Lyman: In higher education I guess the biggest change in the last 20 years has been the near-completion of opening it up in some form or other to all Americans. (When I say "near-completion," I don't want to sound as if I think there is nothing more to be done. I don't think that.) The process of opening up was well under way by 1965 but it's gone a lot further since. Higher education has become a nationwide and very major institution, regarded by everybody as one of the big sectors in American life.

The leveling off of the percentage of high school graduates who go on to higher education we're now seeing is part of what I have in mind in saying "near completion." There is still room for effort to reach those who simply aren't given the opportunity for higher education. The time at which they're not given it is very early in their lives. It's not a question of their not being able to get into college when they graduate from high school; they've never gone to high school or never finished. Why? Because they have been intellectually deprived, practically from the word go. If your parents don't have any books and don't read — are illiterate, in fact (which, as Jonathan Kozol tells us, an appalling percentage of Americans really are) — you're not going to stand much of a chance.

Some people somehow escape that sort of confining environment. (Heaven only knows how they do it; maybe we'll learn about that some day.) But they are few. I think whether most people have a chance of going on to higher education is probably very clear by the time they're seven or eight years old.

As I look back, I wish I would have been more mindful not only of the importance of diversity and of bringing along the disadvantaged, but also of the ways in which subtle and not-so-subtle prejudice against the female sex operated in the academic world. I think that's a particularly insidious kind of prejudice because most people aren't aware they have it.

What have been some consequences of trying to include more and more people in education?

Kerr: The explosion of rights for groups that previously were not as well represented as they should have been, who have been demanding their rights and organizing to get them, has started all kinds of conflicts. Over the last 20 or 25 years, the American nation has been fragmenting. This has had an impact on education at all levels.

Keppel: Special interest groups, you understand, are good things if you happen to believe in them. You have doubts about them when you have too many of them. They tend to fragment the situation.

Tyler: Special interest groups tend to see only the needs of their own constituency. The forces for consolidation see the importance of improving education in general.

Howe: I think there has been some fragmentation of a very important American belief about the schools — the belief that the public schools of this country constitute a significant element in giving a common experience to the children of a democracy that will allow them to continue both the spirit and the fact of that democracy.

Paradoxically, the reason this belief has fragmented has been this very great change we've been talking about. As more and more Americans of different color, different language and different background have entered the schools, people have been less sure that the schools were providing children a common experience. With tensions, political difficulties, excitement over busing and so forth, you began to get abrasions of feeling. People tended to give up some of their belief in the significance of public schools as a central socializing factor.

I think we've got to work hard to recapture that belief.

Ravitch: I feel very strongly that people within education have almost a sense of hopelessness or cynicism about whether they can deal with outside forces. They have lost confidence in their ability to educate despite all the social pressures. I think that's new.

People in schools always knew that some kids came from poor homes or their parents were immigrants or out of work or whatever. But educators thought their jobs were somehow insulated from what was going on outside. Now they have to deal with the outside dangers like drugs, political crises, television or changes in family structure. Loss of confidence has infiltrated the psyches of educators to

the point where it's close to disabling. For example, when I think I'm talking about curriculum with teachers or administrators, the next minute somebody says, "But what about drugs and television and working mothers?" All these things become a rationale not to be effective, to say, "We can't do it because. . . ."

Teachers seem to have been hard hit in recent years by all sorts of change. Although we talk more about teachers later, what about the effects on them of the effort to include more and more students in schools?

Kerr: Teachers have been under the pressure of this fragmentation as much as anybody in society. They're kind of on the firing line for a lot of impacts of fragmentation, for racial problems and the problems of men versus women.

Keppel: I suppose you could say the best thing is that teachers in most public schools and some colleges are now facing the reality of American society. That is, they must now deal realistically with all levels of American society — with the children of the poor and the children of families that have no intellectual possessions. They really didn't face that before 1960 or 1965 when colleges were filled with the children of the middle class and the children of the poor and the minorities dropped out before they got to high school.

But if the best thing is realism, the worst thing is discouragement: it's hard to do. What you hear is the discouragement.

Wirtz: The schools faced a problem in the 1960s that they simply were not able to handle. All of a sudden you had the baby boom, which increased high school enrollments tremendously. At the same time you had the emergence in this country of egalitarianism, a belief in equity in education, which meant a lot of kids who had been permitted (or perhaps encouraged) to drop out of school stayed on. The whole system wasn't able to absorb so many kids, a good number of them coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Yet the community was insisting that kids be kept in school. I think teachers in the 1960s faced a problem that was almost impossible to handle.

I believe we have gotten back on top of that problem. There is now in this country an emphasis on standards in teaching, standards of excellence as well as of minimum competence. I find now, I think, a return to a set of standards that is perhaps even better than the one we had before.

Howe: Teaching has become a more difficult job. One of the things that's made it more difficult is the inclusion of a whole lot of kids in the schools, particularly the high schools, who have not been there before. These youngsters have very special educational needs and handicaps, and they've needed inventive approaches to helping them learn. It's not easy to initiate into schools designed primarily for middle-class kids a group of kids who do not have in their homes and neighborhoods the opportunities middle-class kids have. The teachers have borne the brunt of the biggest educational change that's taken place without a great deal of support.

Adapting the schools to the service of new populations is what teachers have been struggling with for the last 20 years. I don't think anybody has ever told them loudly enough how well they've done. (In fact, they've heard just the opposite.) But if you look at the recent results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, you'll find considerable evidence of improvement in the reading and computational skills of disadvantaged elementary school students. Teachers have done that and our secondary schools are now seeking a way to do it there.

Let's go back to the notion of standards, which Mr. Wirtz mentioned. How have they fared in the effort to make education more inclusive?

Sanford: To a certain extent, the quality of education has suffered because of the charge given to the education establishment to make society more integrated. The burden of doing away with segregation — not the whole burden but the principal burden — fell on the school system. That affected education in a detrimental way. It affected society in a very beneficial way. It was a price worth paying. But it was a price that was paid, nonetheless.

I think we're probably beyond that now. I think now we can look back again at how we can improve the quality of education.

Ravitch: A number of school superintendents have said in retrospect that they knowingly lowered standards because they wanted to have the same pass rates for Black and White children. I think that was a mistake. Educators should have reallocated their resources. They should have taught differently. But they should not have lowered standards, because they ended up having a cheapened product for Black and White students.

Wirtz: I think a serious lowering of standards did develop in the last 20 years. The most obvious reflection of it was the ridiculous decision to reduce the content level of textbooks by one or two years. There was a time there when we were letting a good many students by with diplomas that just didn't mean a thing.

Now, though, we're requiring them to get at it. There's a real tendency now to ask young people in this country to learn geometry a year earlier than they used to learn it. The minimum competency tests are another illustration. I think students now are being held to a higher standard than before, not just at the bottom, but all the way up and down. We're making it tougher — and that's what we should be doing.

Tyler: If you raise standards without helping teachers learn how to help students more, it simply means that more students drop out. I did a study for the New York Regents in 1936 and found that the dropout rate had greatly increased after the grade average required for graduation from New York high schools was raised in 1930.

If your purpose is to improve education, you should help people educate. If your purpose is to sort out in some way — if you only want certain people for employment or certification — you may want to raise standards.

Trow: In education at large, the most important news has been the profound deterioration in secondary education over the past 20 years. I think there's been a very marked decline in the quality of academic preparation. More and more youngsters have moved out of solid English and mathematics and science, for example, and into a variety of para-educational subjects. Associated with this has been a decline in achievement — substantial decline at both the top and the bottom of the ability scale. You might say a system in trouble went from trouble into crisis. We're there now.

Why has deterioration been profound?

Trow: Well, that's a hard one. I think there has been further deterioration in the public school teaching staff and administrators. I think the schools had a very heavy load of noneducational functions thrust on them — social and ethnic integration in particular and all sorts of other things. In a generation of focus on social justice, learning was subordinated. There was a fierce hostility to internal differentiation among schools, and excellence was looked on with considerable suspicion. In many places it still is.

The fate of the secondary schools has been a desperate leveling. But it's very hard to maintain schools of unique distinction unless one is prepared to accept high differentiation. All over the country, 20-30-40 years ago, there were high schools specifically defined as college preparatory high schools. There are very many fewer today. Now we're trying to recreate them in the form of "magnet schools."

I think the passion for equality really has been the enemy of excellence for this past 20 years.

Are there other consequences of bringing so many new students into education?

Edgerton: One of the major changes in higher education has been the growth of public systems and the sort of envelopment of individual campuses into larger systems. The idea that there are economies of scale led, in both elementary/secondary and higher education, to the growth of units that are absurdly large. Another reason that the people who built higher education in the sixties thought large institutions were necessary is that only large institutions could support graduate-student assistants with enough undergraduate bodies that graduate departments could grow in power and prestige.

I think that growth is over. But it brought phenomenal change in the 1960s. I think we underestimate not only the shift but the pace of the shift. For example, enrollments at my university grew, in the short period of time I was there, from 20,000 students to 40,000 students. You start the 1960s with a community of faculty who know each other and have loyalties to their institution. You end the decade with twice as many students; more than half the faculty have arrived in a period of only four to six years. (My own department grew from 20 to 40 in four years.) The consequence is an extraordinary change in the nature of the institution.

We didn't stop to think about the effects of all that on the primary function of higher education — which was teaching undergraduates.

Keppel: Tremendous growth was the single biggest change in higher education. Included in that growth was a dramatic increase in the number of women in higher education.

When I was commissioner, we counted up the number of students we figured were going on to college. It looked as if we were going to be short of professors. We had a great time spreading around fellowships, but I think we probably overdid the encouragement of people to take the Ph.D. for college teaching. Our intentions were good. But we didn't add very well.

Tyler: Twenty years ago, the great preoccupation in schools and colleges was meeting the needs of an increasing population — providing classrooms, providing teachers, providing transportation.

That, of course, is not the preoccupation today. Now the bigger concern of administrators and faculty is that of *not* having enough rapid growth. They're often more concerned than I think they should be with maintaining a full staff and getting adequate funds. I think administrators are paying less attention than they should to education itself, to what students are learning and how effectively they're being taught.

Have there been changes in what students are being taught?

Ravitch: We have lost, I think maybe temporarily, any sense of what everyone should know. It's almost impossible to get people together on the question of what an educated person should know at the age of 18 — or 21, or 30, or any age. People within any particular discipline are just as split up as people outside the discipline. We're so enthralled with the idea of cultural pluralism that almost any statement about what a child should learn becomes a political statement.

I think cultural pluralism originated in the late 1960s with the feeling that our culture was too dominated by a kind of White, European, male, ethnocentric outlook. As we began to include more and more points of view — as we should have — the center didn't hold.

A culture has to have a center. There has to be some agreement about "this is what it means to be an American; these are the things we care about and want to transmit across the generations." That center is fragmented. I think we're not going to have any sense of an American culture unless we can describe it. Define it. Teach it.

Wirtz: I find myself tempted to take refuge in quotation. There are three lines of T.S. Eliot that have helped me a good deal:

> Where is the life we have lost in living?
> Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
> Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?
> [***The Rock***, 1934]

I have the feeling that in the last 20 years there has been a tendency to move toward an emphasis on information and perhaps away from broader concepts. As I see education today, it has gotten into what is perhaps an overemphasis on information as distinguished from the development of knowledge, learning to think and learning to learn.

It seems to me, from conversations with young people and teachers, from looking at academic curricula, from looking at the distribution or redistribution of subject matter in the high schools, that there is more and more emphasis on particular and often rather narrow subject matter. This contrasts with an older tradition of more liberal education, more emphasis on values, more emphasis on knowledge. Now it seems to me we find a concentration on information — on the sort of thing that can be scored on an objective-answer test.

Edgerton: In higher education, the information transmission model no longer fits the society we live in — in part because students can acquire information in a lot of other ways and in part because the much more urgent need is to teach intellectual abilities and motivation and character and so on. The lecture mode is a very efficient way to get students to remember a lot of information. But if your objective is to teach abilities rather than to share information, it's one of the worst methods. Yet 75% or more of what's going on in college and university classrooms on any given day is still a teacher lecturing and students taking notes. If I were teaching today, I'd teach differently.

Lyman: In the late 1960s and early 1970s, requirements were abandoned right, left and center. At Stanford we kept something called "distribution requirements." But I used to say that it would require a very special effort and quite an intelligent person to spend four years at Stanford, get the requisite number of units for graduation and not fulfill the distribution requirements. Then, in the last half of the 1970s, we spent laborious hours in one committee or another putting Humpty Dumpty back together again — in better form than he'd been before, I must say. A long effort culminated as I was leaving in 1980 with a new set of distribution requirements, based much more on acquainting people with certain kinds of intellectual process and function than with particular pieces of subject matter.

Edgerton: I think the biggest change in higher education has been within the system. The development of community colleges, the growth of adult enrollments, the growth of continuing education and of specialized education all add up to a kind of college that's like an academic shopping center. The shift from the college as a community of teachers and learners to a much broader and more diverse delivery system has fundamentally changed the relationship of student to institution. Now the relationship is not to the whole institution but to the course.

Now the transaction has more to do with the particular subject being learned (or not learned) than with the development of character, values and the other kinds of things that used to take place in the context of a residential educational experience. Going to college now is sort of like living in a hotel instead of in a community, or in an anonymous big city instead of in a neighborhood.

The expansion of colleges and the rise of the commuting student as the typical student have automatically changed the relationship between student and institution. Students now are much less involved in their educational experience. They make a much more partial commitment than they used to make, because who they are and what the institutions are have both changed.

There's a lot more mobility in higher education now; it's a much more loosely structured experience. Educators talk about "coherent curriculum," but it only looks coherent from the top down. Students never experience it as a coherent curriculum; they don't even experience coherent institutions.

Some other significant changes in the last 20 years?

Crim: I think growing public demands for more education and better education have been a big change. These days we don't have to fight everybody to say everybody ought to be educated.

Tyler: Concern for education always develops, in my experience, when there's a downturn in the economy. When we have great affluence, people don't worry about education — they worry about getting more of the things they're getting.

After the depression of 1893, the Committee of Ten was appointed to try to re-do the high school curriculum. With the depression of 1912, when the average kid dropped out of school before he finished sixth grade, there was a great push to get kids to stay in school. The thought was that if what we call junior high schools were established, kids would be interested in staying on longer. In 1935 there was a big conference on the crisis in American education where it was predicted that the public schools were so bad they wouldn't last through the 1940s.

When people find their plans for a new car or better housing or something else are not materializing, they want to blame their social institutions, typically their schools.

Sanford: I think we've seen considerable growth in the support of education and the willingness to support it.

When we got the Education Commission of the States started, we had every state represented at our first meeting in Kansas City, and we had 19 or 20 governors there. (Very seldom do you get 20 governors together for anything.) At that time, you would have had to conclude that not more than half a dozen governors made education the #1 order of business of the state. I think you would find today that almost every governor makes education the #1 order of business.

So, if I had to pick out a change, I'd say it's the greater involvement of the leadership of the states, of the governors, in the support of education and the promotion of education. I'd like to think that the Education Commission of the States has had something to do with it. I also think more and more governors have come to the conclusion that the best investment is in human resources.

Mr. Edgerton has a point to make about growth of another sort—the growth of expectations.

Edgerton: The baby boom, the interest in social justice, Sputnik — a unique set of conditions — presented a challenge to higher education in 1965 that resulted in expectations that were unprecedented. Now the baby boom has passed and interest in social justice has waned. A sort of new Sputnik is coming back in the form of economic rivalry with Japan. But, basically, we've seen a sort of leveling off of extraordinary public expectations for higher education.

A dissenting opinion from Mr. Trow on the extent of change in higher education.

Trow: Higher education, I think, has been remarkably unchanged over the past 20 years. On the whole, it did not suffer as much or as permanently from the events of the 1960s as I thought it might at the time. It recovered pretty well. One reason is that higher education consists of 3,000 institutions. They're highly dispersed and control is not centralized, so there's no way in which a single authority can impose its will on them. Second, there's a very large private sector,

and many private institutions are at the top of the university ladder. The great private research universities, not as vulnerable to political pressure as the rest of the system, maintained the standards for everyone.

A comment from Mr. Howe on the pace of educational change.

Howe: Educational change takes place relatively slowly. It has taken place relatively slowly in the last 20 years, even though there's been a lot of it, and it's going to take place slowly in the next 20 years, even though there will probably be a lot of it.

When I say "slowly," what I mean is that there's a very great difference between political timetables and educational timetables. Most political officials — governors, state legislators, congressmen, presidents — get re-elected every two years or every four, and they tend to adjust their timetables for educational change to those periods. Any state legislator who's going to back a new piece of legislation wants change in time to boast about it when he comes up for re-election. That isn't going to happen.

It didn't happen with the changes we've had in the last 20 years. Take the biggest change, as far as schools are concerned. Title I of the Elementary/Secondary Education Act was enacted in 1965 and the first money flowed out in 1966, but nobody could find anything that happened as a result of it until the late 1970s. Luckily, the political figures involved had enough faith to keep the legislation intact and to continue appropriations. Now elementary school test scores have improved, and I think Title I money was in part responsible. Luckily, we had enough patience to let the schools find ways to bring about change.

Society's Most Important Occupation

3

Teaching is society's most important occupation. The kind of society we want to live in, what we want ourselves and our children to be — our whole hopes — depend on education. There is no more important work than teaching.

— Ralph Tyler

Developments inside and outside education over the last 20 years have presented teachers with very large challenges. As Terry Sanford points out, "The problem is in the classroom because the opportunity is in the classroom." He adds, "It doesn't make much difference what kind of superstructure we have if we don't do well in the classroom." Some of those problems and those opportunities are discussed below. Contributors look at the record of the past two decades with varying degrees of distress. But they find reason to hope for a better future for teachers.

Ravitch: I can't think of a single good thing that's happened to teaching and teachers in the last 20 years.

The worst thing is that teachers have lost authority. Yet the one thing a teacher must have is authority, because teaching involves someone who knows transmitting to someone who doesn't know. If the person who knows doesn't get the recognition that goes with knowledge, then he or she is really handicapped from the beginning. Worst of all is that, in many cases, teachers have stopped believing in themselves and in what they do.

Howe: The worst thing that's happened to teachers is the loss of public confidence in them, which is a byproduct of the loss of public confidence in schools. I think teachers have been accused of not caring or not performing adequately in broad generalizations that are frequently undocumented and for which there is inadequate evidence. Much of the talk about declining test scores has been overdone. We have tended to use teachers as whipping boys.

What teachers have done in the middle of all this is to go ahead and try to do their jobs. I don't believe that teachers have been goofing off, and I don't know of any studies that responsibly show that they have.

Tyler: I believe that human beings ought to talk about the things they are doing rather than about the things that happen to them.

I think teachers have been developing most effectively in connection with the effort to reach the so-called "disadvantaged" children. If you look at the results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, you'll find steady improvements since we recognized the need to give attention to children who come from disadvantaged homes. Now the lowest 25% of our 14-year-olds are where the 50% level is in most countries.

The worst thing is the difficulty of changing one's habits and practices. A considerable number of teachers are learning how to reach new kinds of students. A large number are, unfortunately, apparently unable to change their habits sufficiently to meet the challenges we face.

Edgerton: In higher education, compensation, working conditions, esteem and all those sorts of things have gotten worse for teachers since 1965. But, as I've pointed out, I think that expectations then were extraordinarily high, which means that decline has been from a very abnormal baseline.

One good thing is probably a derivative of the growth of research and the proliferation of new ideas and new fields. There are now more exciting fields of knowledge to take part in and to teach. That, in turn, is a consequence of our current interest in force-feeding science and technology. The very rapid evolution of basic science, of science to technology and of technology to product has expanded the knowledge base at a fantastic rate. For anyone who is caught up in bio-engineering or computers or any other of the hot fields, that's an exciting and marvelous development.

On the other hand, the morale of teachers in the less-hot fields is at very low ebb. Although most of them came into higher education with high expectations, it seems to them now that students are more poorly prepared than ever before, working conditions are worse, salaries are not keeping pace with inflation. Worst of all, they see a future constricted by a sharp decline in mobility. Most faculty in higher education today are living in situations where they have no hope of changing their lives.

Generalizing about morale is dangerous, though — because morale is a function of a lot of things, and because morale is in some places good. But certainly morale has slid from 20 years ago.

Lyman: In elementary and secondary schools there's been a long, grinding downgrading of teaching as a profession that's partly from forces outside, partly from forces inside.

What are some of those forces?

Lyman: I think the attitude of college faculties toward primary and secondary school teachers is a very significant factor in diminishing the respect that's paid teachers and the capacity of schools of education to recruit talented people. If you sit in classes on arts and sciences and get told by your professors all the time that nobody in his right mind would go into teaching — what are you going to come out with?

This attitude is of longer standing than 20 years, but it's probably become better established in the last 20 years. It's a vicious cycle. There's more reason to have that attitude now because teaching has lost ground in just about all respects, whether you're talking about autonomy in the classroom or relative pay or self-image.

Ravitch: I think a major issue today, and one I hope something will be done about, is the organization of working conditions in schools, the organization of the teaching profession. Teaching life in American schools with its bosses and workers has a very hierarchical quality. I think that may have been appropriate at some time in our history, but I don't think it's appropriate any more. It's not professional. How can teaching be a profession if teachers aren't treated as professionals?

If teaching continues to be organized very much like a factory job, I don't think attracting independent-minded people into teaching and holding them there is going to be possible.

Lyman: I'm not antiunion, but I'm skeptical of the unionization of teachers, and intellectuals in general. It seems to me that while unionization has perhaps protected them from some of the worst forms of exploitation, it has also the effect of pushing them away from professional status in the minds of others and even in their own minds and habits. Unions are well-devised instruments for protecting things like pay scales and vacations. They're not very satisfactory instruments for maintaining professional standards.

I think, for instance, that the annual wave of teachers' strikes is demoralizing in the end. Striking may give teachers a feeling of solidarity while they're doing it, but it's ultimately demoralizing to their students and to the public's view of the teaching profession. Teachers' living standards have slipped, despite unionization, and that can't be good either.

Crim: All of the criticism of teachers has made them sort of protect their flanks a bit more and give less. This is not because of any lesser talent, in my opinion, and I think teachers now are really better trained than they used to be.

The worst thing that has happened is that, for whatever reasons, teachers don't seem to have the same missionary zeal they had in earlier years. I can't prove that, and I can't totally explain it. Maybe one reason was that education was so badly paid you had to have a special reason for wishing to work with young people. Today, especially now that we're beginning to experience another teacher shortage, we're looking for people, period, and not necessarily for people who feel education would become their secular ministry. Teaching has become more of a job.

Keppel: The thing that worries me as much as anything else about the next two decades is that we're entering a period when we'll have to recruit about a million teachers, if we keep up our current teacher-student ratio. At the same time, the young women on whom the schools have depended are, thank heaven, going into advanced careers in law, medicine and business. For a century we've been relying on intelligent and devoted women. Some of them were rather badly educated in teachers colleges but — never mind, they were intelligent and they taught themselves. Where are their replacements going to come from? Where's that quality coming from? Recruiting's going to be tough.

Sanford: If we're going to have good morale and attract better and better people to the teaching profession, it's absolutely essential to make teaching seem important. I think we've neglected as a society to do that. We've continued to take teachers for granted. We've continued to berate them, on the one hand, and to count on them heavily, on the other.

So, we need to pay teachers more, and we need to treat them with more respect. Those are the beginnings of a better system of education.

Howe: In a funny way, I think the circumstances we now face are going to turn things around.

People are becoming convinced that we need to get better teachers and we need to pay them better so we'll have effective learning and more employable people. In four or five years, we're going to have a national crisis in the supply of teachers which, I think, will have us all praying able young people become teachers.

There are already signs of progress. A few states have moved to improve teachers' salaries and tried to improve the preparation of teachers. Progress is still sporadic but it's there.

We made teachers the villains of education, a position I don't think they ever deserved. Now we're trying to do something to improve the teaching force and reward it. Whether we'll ever do the latter adequately, I don't know. We certainly aren't doing it now.

We have to learn that the subsidy low-paid women provided to schools for 100 years is over and we aren't entirely willing to do so. Also, the cost of paying teachers adequately will mean a willingness to raise new funds for schools. President Reagan's plan to cancel the deductibility of state and local taxes is a powerful deterrent to any increase in school funding.

Tyler: The future is full of surprises because human beings are the ones who make it.

If I surveyed all the young people today and found that young people see a mission in teaching and want to go into it, then I would predict that our schools would improve more rapidly than in the past. When I was vice chairman of the National Commission on Teacher Education, which operated from 1938 to 1946, we found the best way to recruit was to go into high schools and talk to young people about the great mission of teaching and the satisfactions of working with children. If we waited until people got into college, they thought they had to decide whether teaching might be a little bit better than going into some other occupation. The place I would go to recruit teachers is where young people are still looking forward with eager eyes to doing something important in life.

Students – Always Different, Always the Same

4

Students are always different, and students are always the same.

— Richard Lyman

When ECS asked contributors whether students were different in 1985 than in 1965, most agreed that the differences are less in students' selves than in their surroundings. As Ralph Tyler pointed out, "Studies show that babies born in 1985 are no different than babies born in 1776 in terms of physical development and educability." But certainly the circumstances into which babies are born—and in which young people are educated—have changed from 1965, perhaps several times. Here's some lively speculation on the nature and extent of those changes.

Howe: As I've already said, students are different in the sense that they're a different bunch of people. The spectrum is broader now than it was in 1985. We may even be expanding the concept of "student" to include 4-year-olds. The emphasis on early childhood is a major new phenomenon. We've had Operation Headstart. We've had a tremendous revival of kindergartens, and we're now seeing a lot of concern about changing daycare centers into places that educate. There are people on the child development scene who think we ought to worry most about the health, emotional development and social development of such young children — and let intellectual development come later. But, clearly, interest in turning 4-year-olds into students is growing. That's an interesting prospect.

In another sense, students are the same. They tend to be responsive to the political and social environment they find around them. Because that environment has changed a good deal, I think the attitudes of students have tended to change. Students in the 1960s declared themselves in opposition to institutions, national policies and various other things because that's what was going on around them in society. As the national scene has changed, so have students. With the

development of a national psychology that emphasizes the competitive instincts and to some extent deemphasizes caring about other people have come more quiescent students seeking success in primarily economic terms.

I think we're seeing an interesting break away from some of that now, particularly around South African issues. The move away from a sort of ego-centered view of higher education to a wider view I find a hopeful development.

Sanford: I had a little demonstration on South Africa as I concluded graduation ceremonies at Duke this year. Well, I was pleased to see it. Not that I thought the demonstrators were right on their particular issue; I didn't. That's beside the point. The point was that so many students had an interest in doing something important.

Lyman: The rhetoric about the South African issue may be fairly hot, but the behavior of students hasn't been nearly as coercive as it was in the 1960s. Nobody is throwing any deans out of windows, putting up barricades or committing any of those crimes of violence or near-violence that became quite common in 1969.

(Stanford had a lot more trouble than most people realized. We ceased to repair windows because they were broken again as soon as we repaired them — quite systematically. We began to fix them about 1972, I think.)

Whether we're headed back toward that, I don't know. I've always said that, since those outbreaks, the wall separating students from that sort of behavior could never be rebuilt full-strength and that it would be easier to topple the next time than it was the last time.

It's no accident that universities have been regarded as centers of trouble in all the countries where there have been universities and for as long as there have been universities. It's natural. Look at what young people are like. They have tremendous energy. They have not yet formed a very sophisticated view of the world. They believe things are simpler than they are and that therefore, if good things aren't happening, it must be because bad people are preventing them from happening. That's explosive stuff.

Trow: Students weren't nearly as radical in 1965 as the papers said. Evidence has shown that the papers enjoyed the enormously photogenic activities of a relatively small leadership. There's a conspiracy, in a way, between the media and radical leadership: they feed on one another.

Ms. Ravitch remembers an incident from 1969 that she says has shaped her own thinking. It also serves as a reminder that the times have been troubled in schools as well as universities.

Ravitch: In 1969 I was doing research for my first book, ***The Great School Wars,*** in the professional library of the New York City school system. There had just been a very bitter school strike that had closed the schools for two months. When the strike ended, it was agreed that the schools would add 45 minutes to the school day for the rest of the year to make up for lost time. As I sat reading in the library about the 1890s in New York, when overcrowding caused demonstrations by angry parents demanding their children be allowed into school, there was another demonstration going on outside the school board's Brooklyn headquarters. In the middle of the school day, hundreds and hundreds of students, mainly minorities, carried placards saying "Hell, No, We Won't Go." That is, they didn't want to go to school those extra 45 minutes.

I guess I was struck by the disjunction in attitude. Parents and children were upset in the 1890s about being excluded from school, and students in 1969 were demonstrating to demand their right not to go to school. I began doing a lot of thinking about how our values had gotten so confused.

What about now? What else seems to be changing about students?

Edgerton: A softer and subtler change is taking place. As a result of the loosening of family arrangements and the rise in the power and pervasiveness of television, students are coming into school and from school into college with no experience of structured learning. This means they bring different character traits to the educational experience: less discipline, less motivation, less persistence. There's been a change of context. Students today are the children of a fluid, rootless mass society heavily influenced by the media.

Schools and colleges once presumed students had motivation and discipline and so on. These preconditions for learning can no longer be presumed.

Sanford: Certainly television has become a bigger and bigger part of students' lives in the last 20 years. A good deal of their education, if you can call it that, comes from television. That's had considerable impact on education and perhaps on students' ability to write and to understand the written word. Television has given this generation of students a great deal of additional knowledge. What it has done for the thought process, I'm not sure.

Edgerton: Students now are much more worldly, much more aware, much more informed. But underneath it all, they're much more uncertain about how to sort it all out. My 16-year-old and my 17-year-old know much more about what's going on in the world than I did in high school. But they have a harder time sitting still reading a book for three hours, and they are more confused about what it all means.

Kerr: There are some good objective reasons why students should be less sure now about their futures and the future of the nation. They're a lot less hopeful in 1985 than they were in 1965. Generally, 1965 was a time when students had high expectations. But a lot has changed. In 1965 they all expected to get jobs; in 1985, they're less sure. The Cold War has warmed up, and there are more bombs overhead for everybody to worry about.

Wirtz: I get the feeling that young people are less certain about their futures — or perhaps about the future — than was true 20 years ago. There's more doubt. Some worry about whether there's going to be a place for them in a high technology society. Others worry about whether somebody's going to blow up the planet. That's not an idle concern.

Ms. Ravitch is concerned about extremes of seriousness in some students.

Ravitch: What I've sensed, speaking on campuses and visiting around, is a kind of seriousness in students that in the extreme is almost unhealthy. It becomes a kind of vocationalism and questing after material goods above all else. There's a kind of foolish anxiety about "What am I going to do with the rest of my life?" — something kids of 15 or 16 shouldn't be worried about. I've seen an awful lot of educators encouraging this excessive vocationalism. Some *elementary* schools are even offering career guidance!

Mr. Crim makes a couple of telling points about the larger society to which students respond.

Crim: The drive for everyone to remain young means we don't have the same division between children and adults we once had. This presents young people with a problem in deciding who they want to grow up to be. I feel that young people today are more like children than they were in the 1950s and 1960s, in the sense of seeking good times. I also feel they don't see many grown-up adults.

Another, perhaps paradoxical, point. As senior citizens have come to make up more and more of our population, I think we have seen concern shift to adults and away from young people. We have made senior citizens one of the most economically secure groups in our country. Meanwhile, most of the unemployed people in this country are young people. The situation is not getting better, it's getting worse — especially for minority youth. We want to deny employment opportunities to young people until they reach age 22 or 24. At the same time, we expect them to be highly motivated and highly disciplined during this time of delay.

Mr. Sanford takes a bright view of how students have changed, and Mr. Tyler takes the long view.

Sanford: We might have had a little backsliding, but there's been a constantly rising level of student competence — certainly at Duke and I suspect everywhere. (Announcing that the SATs have slipped back a point or two, I think, is meaningless commentary; the SATs aren't that precise in the first place.) I think students are brighter and smarter and better educated when they reach college than ever before.

Tyler: Students are human beings who know they're going to grow up. They want to achieve something as adults, and they're seeking ways to do that. They use what they can find in their environment to help them get away from being treated as children. They're trying to figure out how to become important. That's always been true.

Resurgence of State Policy Making

5

The 1960s and early 1970s was a period of federal dominance in education policy. Only in the late 1970s, starting really with the minimum competency tests, did state policy makers begin to reassert themselves. The early 1980s brought a major resurgence of state policy making.

— Diane Ravitch

No look at state educational policy over the past 20 years is really possible without at least a quick look at federal policy as well. In this section, contributors cast a backward glance at the ebb and flow of recent education policy, examine some consequences of political developments in education and touch briefly on the special role of the Education Commission of the States.

Keppel: In 1965, most state policy was connected with schools rather than with colleges. It was a very conservative force. Most states had no desire to deal with race problems, civil rights or the problems of the poor. They were banged into action by the federal government.

Kerr: The big impact on education in the last 20 years has been the policy of the federal government. What with things like busing and affirmative action, it's been a period of federal dominance such as we've never seen before. Now we're moving rapidly from a federal period back to emphasis on the states, which has been the basic situation during most of our history.

Keppel: Now many states have begun to take some initiative. Specifically, in the last five years the states are leading the nation in trying to stiffen up academic standards for high schools.

State efforts have, by the way, not been properly recognized by the press, which has tended to give the impression that national reports like ***A Nation at Risk*** stimulated the country to stiffen standards. That's bad history, since, in fact, a good many states were already doing this years before. In my judgment, those national reports recorded what was happening rather than stimulating it.

Edgerton: States have been the big movers and shakers in education in the last couple of years — the governors, primarily, have seen the connections between state economic development in education at all levels. (The federal government was the last to wake up to what was happening.) A big question now is whether the states will have staying power.

Howe: In general, the states have become more powerful and more useful in spreading, financing and developing education over the last 20 years. They've still got a long way to go, and some of them do a lot better than others.

State authorities have tended to see higher education as an activity that needs more central planning. There's at least an argument that this has reduced the autonomy of the individual institution somewhat, as have some activities of the national government. In at least a minor way — in some people's view a major way — there has been some centralizing of higher education. This has perhaps tended to reduce its diversity, even though the diversity of higher education in this country has been a genuine strength.

I think counter-forces are now building. When people from higher education get together now to talk about their worries, they express concern that they may need to become more vigorous in defining what is reasonably their preserve and what belongs to government, state or national. I think there is more concern now, and at a higher level, about not accepting unreasonable advances from government for control of higher education affairs.

In general, then, the growing role of state governments contains both elements of progress and elements of danger. I think you have to watch this trend with care. But, on the whole, I think it has been positive.

Keppel: The increase in the costs of higher education have forced governors and legislators to create coordinating commissions. This is not good, not bad, but inevitable.

Trow: A lot of people, myself included, are very dubious about the tendency to bring all public institutions in a state under a single board of higher education. The most successful system of higher education in the country, the California system, is a sharply differentiated tripartite system. The great problem with the strong single board is that maintaining high excellence is very hard. There is a tendency to level.

Lyman: The tendency of state policy to increase monitoring and regulation is most visible in primary and secondary schools, but it has also taken place in higher education — all the way from line-item budgeting to dictating textbooks to dictating various details of how to conduct a class.

Crim: Without a doubt, the states have invested more money in education in the past 20 years. They've also assumed far greater control.

At a time when we're in search of excellence and businesses are learning they have to decentralize, education is becoming more centralized. I think all of us have to realize that where change really takes place is in the school and in the classroom. We do have to establish some standards and some expectations. But we're going to have to provide more flexibility for schools and teachers.

Lyman: The consolidation of authority in state legislatures, especially for primary and secondary schools, has meant a fragmentation of authority at the local level. Nobody has much authority there. School boards, teachers, principals, superintendents all find themselves less potent than they were 20 years ago. Only state government is more potent.

Trow: I think one really has to look at state policy state by state. The variation has been enormous. In California, we've had two governors whose terms covered many of those 20 years — Reagan and Brown — who were quite hostile to higher education. The university was injured by them both. But — and I find this fascinating — it persisted. It survived to a degree that would have been hard to predict. What defended it was a lot of political support and bureaucratic rules — "treaties," you might call them. Behind the scenes, formula funding ground on, supporting the university in quite decent fashion.

Where Mr. Trow finds immunity of a sort, Mr. Lyman, in a somewhat different sense, finds higher education no longer immune.

Lyman: Higher education has become subject to government regulation at all levels, more or less like other segments of American society. Before 1965 or so, higher education saw itself as somehow immune. It was, in fact, immune: it wasn't subject to the National Labor Relations Act, for example. But by the time OSHA (the Occupational Safety and Health Act) came along, it was applied to higher education. I don't think that would have necessarily happened in 1960.

This change has very greatly changed administrative style in major institutions of higher education. The size of the administration has increased enormously merely to meet reporting requirements.

Stanford underwent an OSHA review early in my presidency because one employee complained about an unguarded saw in a shop somewhere. That one complaint about one alleged violation brought a complete investigation of the entire campus, including the medical school, and a set of recommendations as

long as your arm. We managed to resolve most of the problems without too much difficulty, and it was good to be forced to act on some of them. But the leverage that one employee complaint provided was just amazing.

Mr. Tyler reminds us of some limitations inherent in governmental policy.

Tyler: State policy affects what goes on in schools only indirectly. One of the problems with state policies that, say, set graduation requirements is that they don't really change things unless they're accompanied by ways of helping teachers, principals and parents perform more effectively in the education of their children.

When I was director of evaluation for an eight-year national study of 30 school systems during the Great Depression, we found that by working with teachers we could considerably improve the actual educational product. You can't bring about this improvement from the top down. Legislation can help make the environment better, but the actual work has to be done at the local level.

In a sense and from his own perspective, Mr. Trow agrees.

Trow: I think there's a clearer sense now of the limits of governmental power and a sense of the power of society against the state. I think we're not likely now to be quite as optimistic about what the state can do to change society as we were 20 years ago.

More optimistic about the prospects for state policy is Mr. Kerr.

Kerr: I think there were some reasons to fear that the federal emphasis on uniformity might become too overwhelming. I would say that, overall, I welcome the return to the states. Historically, they've done quite well by education.

Ms. Ravitch suggests that some social forces for consolidation may counterbalance the dispersal of authority for education to the states.

Ravitch: We have, increasingly, a national economy. Our population is tremendously mobile. The influence of the mass media has grown over the past 20 years. All this has made the United States very much more a single society.

As I've been travelling and speaking this year, I've heard more and more people asking, "Why do we have 16,000 different school districts?" "Why do we have 50 different state school systems?" "Why don't we have a national test?" "Why don't we have a national curriculum?" These are questions that would never have been raised 20 years ago.

Mr. Wirtz and Mr. Sanford discuss the connection of the Education Commission of the States to state policy.

Wirtz: I'd like to say, in all frankness, that the emergence of the Education Commission of the States seems to have real significance because it has made the states as a whole, working together, an important influence on education. I think it's magnifying the importance of the state experience very greatly.

Sanford: Education is now a very popular side to be on if you're in political life. I think we've seen considerable improvement in state interest and state support; I think that, by and large, we've seen good policy set.

We started out, 20 years ago, talking about Conant's ideas on ***Shaping Educational Policy***. Who was going to shape it? Was it going to be shaped in Washington so we'd have one big, grand national plan that we'd all have to follow? Or were we going to create added interest in all the districts and states across the country and see policy shaped as best suits the local situation? Well, I think the whole concept of the Education Commission of the States is that states and local government ought to be interested in setting policy. I would surely hope that ECS would see to it that this continues to happen.

Constantly Building 6

I think we're constantly building on the shoulders of the people who've gone before. I know that to be the case in my own school system. There is no really great break from the past. I think each generation's obligation is to try to make education better.

— Alonzo Crim

Any system as large and well established as public education seems unlikely to change abruptly or radically. As Mr. Trow puts it, "The safest prediction is that in 20 years things will be remarkably like they are now in anything as difficult to change as education. That would have been a very good prediction for higher education for the past 20 years, and not a terrible one for the rest of the system." But, as contributors look to the future, they see some reasons to worry—about the effect of technology on education and society, about polarization of the educated and the uneducated, about the possibility of weakening support for public education, about the fate of liberal education.

They also see a great many reasons to hope. As Mr. Tyler sums it up: "Bit by bit, we are moving on."

Trow: Clark Kerr says somewhere that about 60 western institutions in existence when Martin Luther was born still survive — and 55 of those 60 are universities. That shows the extraordinary persistence of this institution. I think the next 20 years will bring a lot of superficial changes — more computer consoles on more desks, for example, or perhaps the growth of the system of nonformal education. But I'd say that the main characteristic of higher education will be its continuity and persistence.

Howe: My crystal ball is as cloudy as anybody else's. But it seems to me that education institutions have a tremendous capacity to stay the same, at least as far as structure is concerned. No one is even talking about having fewer grades in school or fewer grades in college, for example.

Edgerton: Inertia as well as continuity is built into any organization. Schools and colleges, more than most, are going to do tomorrow what they are doing today.

The elements of discontinuity are built into the larger society.

My own view is that we have a postindustrial technology but industrial-era social arrangements. I see an intensification and extension of the trends of the industrial era (I mean trends like specialization, interdependence, urbanization), even though we now have a technology that frees us to do things we couldn't imagine before.

The question is: Are we going to develop postindustrial habits to go along with our postindustrial society? Although we have new options, we seem locked into old reasons for doing things.

There seems to be no easy unanimity about the prospects technology holds for American society and education.

Sanford: I think it's frightening to look at all the technology that's come on — all the artificial intelligence, all the communications. We can communicate around the world before we have a chance to think.

Wirtz: As Thorstein Veblen said about 90 years ago, "The ultimate testing of a free society will be whether it can withstand the strains and stresses between scientific invention and human purpose."

The kaleidoscopic explosion of technology has affected education quite substantially, as it has all of society. It has affected the careers of young people and therefore their educational choices. They are, for example, increasingly tempted to take narrow technical courses of one kind or another, such as computer programming. It has affected their roles as citizens. Television is having a tremendous effect on the decision-making process, which seems to create new demands as far as education is concerned. Technological development has made it harder and harder to know enough to be a good voter and citizen. This has created a gap education must fill.

Then I think of that other dimension of education, which is to teach us how to get the most out of life as individuals. Today that means coming to an understanding with machines. It means competing with machines that may have the equivalent of a high school education, don't present any disciplinary problems and do the work a great many people used to do when they left high school.

Howe: I don't know much about computers, but I think institutions are bound to adapt to new modes of learning. The effects of technology on education will probably be larger than before. I think that for one reason: the new technology we have is "interactive." As the possibilities for interaction percolate through the consciousness of teachers and professors, I think they will adapt it to bring about some more efficiency in learning.

Keppel: I'm prepared to say that the use of interactive technology will surpass the use of films as a learning device but will still be second to both books and blackboards as hardware.

I think the basic continuity for public schools is that they will continue to take care of the kids. You're not going to have all the kids left home with little computers, you're still going to have something like the same ratio of adults to children in the classroom that you have now. I simply don't believe that you're going to replace those adults with machines.

In my lifetime (I was born in 1916), I've heard that telephones, radio, television, and now computers are going to take over the schools. Permit me to say that I'm a little dubious.

Mr. Kerr sees an emphasis on technical competence and a deemphasis on equality of opportunity as two quite massive changes that are now taking place. Other contributors are also concerned about aspects of an incomplete civil rights revolution.

Kerr: I think we're moving rather rapidly from an emphasis on equality of opportunity to emphasis on technical competence to advance productivity. Turning toward technical competence means more emphasis on mathematics and the sciences than on humanities and the social sciences. It means more emphasis on merit and competition than on equality of opportunity.

Howe: I wish I could say that I think the undone aspects of the civil rights revolution will somehow get done throughout society and in educational institutions. But, right now, I see little possibility that that will happen.

Lyman: It's a well-known fact that the schools are rapidly becoming more and more populated with the people least likely, on the record of the past anyway, to do well in school or to go on to higher education. The rates at which Hispanos drop out of high school, for example, are perfectly appalling — as high as 70% in some school districts.

My biggest worry is that we'll see the continuing polarization of the educated and the uneducated, and that illiteracy, which is already a larger problem than most people recognize, will become even more obvious.

Keppel: We're failing in the cities. In 1965, we had big problems on our hands in city slums. We seriously underestimated those problems then, and they're a lot worse now.

What about public support for public education? If it is weakening—why?

Ravitch: I think public confidence in public education is in somewhat shaky condition in 1985, regardless of whether the Gallup Poll goes up or down a few points. As people lose confidence in the ability of public schools to reform themselves and to provide the kind of quality most parents want for their children, more and more people are turning to private education of one kind or another. It has been my feeling, the last couple of years, that if the public schools prove themselves inflexible and incapable of real improvement, there will be increasing demands for public support of nonpublic education.

The bedrock faith that public schools are somehow integrally important to a democracy is, I think, no longer a bedrock faith. That loss of faith relates in part to educators' loss of confidence in themselves. They got so battered about they don't believe in themselves anymore. So people say, well, public schools don't stand for anything. Private schools are at least willing to take a stand on things like homework or discipline.

Howe: I think that within the public schools themselves this common belief in their importance to a democracy has eroded. There have been such developments, for example, as the building of small, private, White schools to escape associating with Blacks. There has been another diversionary movement, the development of a lot of small fundamentalist schools that don't expose children to common experiences.

I am not arguing that private schools should not exist. They have a clear constitutional right to exist. I am arguing that some kinds of private schools have been developed in opposition to the idea that youngsters should share a common experience with all kinds of youngsters.

Without regard to the private school issue, I think it's important to find ways to reestablish a sense of the importance of public education in this country.

Sanford: There's been a lot of worry about the trend toward more and more private schools, "Christian" schools so-called, and in every Congress several bills are introduced that would give tax benefits to those schools.

I suppose the school system brought this on itself to a certain degree. But the more we have that kind of fragmentation, the less quality we're going to have in public schools.

I think the public itself has got to pay a great deal of attention to public schools, and I don't like to see a trend that weakens that. On the other hand, this kind of competition may very well get the public school forces moving toward doing a better job.

Trow: The biggest question mark, in my mind, is whether public education can make the kinds of gains that are necessary or whether the system will be privatized. To a very considerable degree, it's already privatized. All over the country, the Black middle class has turned to the parochial schools for secondary education.

The real question — the big policy question — is: Should access to secondary schools that really work be restricted by ability to pay? If not, if you think wealth ought not to be a criterion, the answer could be a voucher system. Vouchers are a way to get poor people into good schools. But the consequences of a two-part system would be enormous, for the public school system and for society.

These would seem to be worries enough and to spare about the future. How about some hopes?

Howe: I hope that education will do basically three things for students — arm them to be economically successful, arm them to be contributing, constructive citizens and arm them internally in their own minds and emotions to be as broadly and fully developed intellectually and culturally as possible.

I also hope that we will find some way to soften what I regard as the competitive elements in education and to emphasize, somehow, the cooperative mode. In elementary schools now, kids learn in groups, they help each other learn and they learn to cooperate. But all that disappears too much from the rest of education. I think it would be great to see people getting academic credit for helping other people's learning rather than just their own.

Lyman: I hope education will protect children from creeping illiteracy, whether the genuine functional kind or the kind that takes the form of not bothering to read anything. As the first president of Stanford, David Starr Jordan, used to say, the person you have to live with all your life is yourself. If you're not a very interesting person, it's your own fault.

I would focus more on cultural awareness and awareness of interrelatedness and interdependence of the whole human race than I would on whether students can cope with computers or contribute to the Gross National Product.

Ravitch: My hope for my children or for anyone else's children is that education will give them the foundation of cultural and scientific literacy that will allow them to continue learning throughout their lives and be knowledgeable, literate people, whatever they choose to do professionally.

Trow: I would hope that education would not stultify children's natural curiosity but encourage, guide and train it. I hope education will teach children how to cultivate and refine their own sensibilities — their own capacity to understand and to learn. The most interesting people I know have retained something of that curiosity. They still show great zest in discovering things in a wide range of fields.

I think people are recognizing that the only security in a society that is changing rapidly lies in learning how to learn.

Kerr: I think we're putting too much emphasis now on getting students ready for their first jobs. I hope education will do more to prepare them for their total lives. I think part of the emphasis on technical performance may be good for the economy. But it may have a stultifying effect on students' developing their capacity to make good use of their lives for themselves and for others.

Edgerton: My hopes are that children will learn two sorts of things. I hope they will develop intellectual abilities so they can keep on learning as knowledge itself becomes very different. I hope they will also pick up certain habits, traits of character, standards of conduct, ideas of right and wrong, capacities like self-discipline, a sense of courage — all those things that go into individual and social renewal.

Crim: We have recognized that economic ability relates directly to education and that if we don't educate folks we'll have to support and shelter them. But I don't think we pay nearly as much attention to spiritual values — to the great idea, the great concept or the great purpose.

Education has vastly improved technically. We have better data on students. We manage instructional programs more effectively. We have better expert advice from the colleges and universities. Where education has not improved nearly as much is in the area of discussion, critical thinking, value development and helping kids sort out beliefs.

Keppel: I guess my principal hope would be for stronger education in the interconnection between science and society. Let me give an example, because I'm spelling "science" with a very small "s" here. Noticeably absent from much of our public life is any understanding of the meaning of statistical data and inference. Under my small "s" science, I would include the ability to tell the difference between millions and billions, to understand ratios, to judge relative importance — in general, to make judgments about issues in which one is not expert.

Wirtz: I hope very much that education will give children a liberal education in the traditional sense. I hope that it puts less emphasis on information and more on thinking. I hope that writing becomes the most important course, because writing is the best training for thinking I know.

I also hope that education will directly and forthrightly put greater emphasis on values, which it has tended to shy away from. I think education has a responsibility to develop a strong sense of values. I mean love. I mean the value that lies in beauty, the value that lies in work, the value that lies in laughter, honest laughter.

A prediction from Mr. Kerr and a challenging final question from Mr. Edgerton.

Kerr: Historically, we have talked about the great natural resources of land, labor and capital. Now we're adding a fourth — knowledge. As we move very quickly into a society where knowledge is a basic resource, more and more people are going to want it — and have to have it. I think it's pretty obvious that education will get more important all the time.

Edgerton: We shape our futures by the choices we make. I wish we would realize that we can design an education that will, in turn, shape the future, rather than always trying to predict the future and see how we can fit people into it. Can education reassert a vision of the kinds of people we want to produce who can, in turn, shape the kind of society in which we want to live?

Typesetter: Marci Reser
Designer: Elisbeth Brookfield
Printer: Tumbleweed Press, Denver